

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 EA-11 NEA-14 IO-14 ISO-00 MMS-04 INRE-00

SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4793

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

CINCPAC

CINCUSNAVEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT LOUIS 0793

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PARM, MARR, XO, MP

SUBJECT: GOM VIEWS ON INDIAN OCEAN CONFERENCE AND DIEGO GARCIA

REF: PORT LOUIS 0776

1. AT END OF MY DISCUSSION TODAY WITH PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM ON CERTAIN UNGA ISSUES, I ASKED HIM HIS CURRENT VIEWS ON PROPOSED DIEGO EXPANSION AND WHETHER HE THOUGHT A REGIONAL INDIAN OCEAN CONFERENCE IS LIKELY. HE RESPONDED THAT A "SUGGESTION" HAD BEEN MADE TO HOLD SUCH A CONFERENCE AMONG THE LITTORAL STATES BUT ALSO INCLUDING AUSTRALIA. HE NOTED THAT WHITLAM HOLDS "STRONG VIEWS" REGARDING IOPZ, WHICH SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT BY ALL CONCERNED. RAMGOOLAM CONFIRMED MY HUNCH (PARA 3 REFTEL) THAT SRI LANKA FINANCE MINISTER PERERA'S VISIT HERE (SEPT. 14-16) WAS PRIMARILY FOR PURPOSE OF
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PROMOTING SUCH CONFERENCE.

2. I GOT IMPRESSION THAT RAM IS DEFINITELY INTERESTED IN SUCH CONFERENCE BUT PROBABLY DOES NOT WANT TO TAKE INITIATIVE OR COMMIT HIMSELF FOR TIME BEING, AT LEAST UNTIL HE HAS BETTER IDEA HOW MAJORITY OTHER COUNTRIES IN AREA FEEL. MY ASSUMPTION WAS STRENGTHENED BY HIS COMMENT THAT INDIAN FOREIGN MINISTER SINGH HAS ASKED TO COME HERE OCTOBER 2 AND RAM HAS JUST SENT MESSAGE TO NEW YORK SUGGESTING THAT SINGH DELAY HIS ARRIVAL HERE FOR A FEW DAYS AT LEAST. RAM OBVIOUSLY EXPECTS THAT SUCH CONFERENCE WILL BE ONE OF MAIN POINTS SINGH WANTS TO RAISE HERE. (RAM SAID NOTHING ABOUT POTENTIAL VENUE, BUT MY OWN GUESS IS THAT AT LEAST INDIA AND SRI LANKA WOULD PREFER SUCH CONFERENCE BE HELD IN MAURITIUS FOR SUCH REASONS AS CENTRAL LOCATION AND RESIDUAL GOM SOVEREIGNTY OVER CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO.)

3. ON DIEGO ITSELF, RAMGOOLAM MADE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. US INSISTENCE ON DIEGO EXPANSION MIGHT "COST ME MY JOB."
(RAM PROFESSES TO BE INCREASINGLY WORRIED AND SENSITIVE TO OPPOSITION POLITICIANS' CRITICISMS THAT HE GAVE AWAY TOO MUCH TOO SOON AND TOO EASILY TO BRITISH PRIOR TO INDEPENDENCE, ESPECIALLY DIEGO. RAM SEEMS TO FEEL THIS ISSUE WILL BE AN ALBATROSS AROUND HIS NECK AS HE APPROACHES ELECTIONS PROBABLY NEXT YEAR.)

B. WHY CAN'T PRESIDENT FORD WAIT 2 YEARS, I.E., UNTIL AFTER NEXT US ELECTION? (THIS WAS PROBABLY RAM'S WAY OF SAYING HE WOULD LIKE US TO DELAY EXPANSION UNTIL AFTER NEXT MAURITIAN ELECTION.)

C. IN ANY EVENT HE HAD INSTRUCTED HIS UN DELEGATION TO MAKE A RELATIVELY MILD STATEMENT ON DIEGO AT UNGA, MAIN POINT OF WHICH WOULD BE TO ASK US TO GIVE ADEQUATE CONSIDERATION TO VIEWS OF COUNTRIES IN INDIAN OCEAN AREA.

4. I BROUGHT RAMGOOLAM UP TO DATE ON STATUS OF DIEGO EXPANSION PROPOSAL IN CONGRESS, POINTING OUT THAT SENATE HAD REDUCED PROPOSED APPROPRIATION FOR DIEGO FROM 29.3 MILLION TO 18.1 MILLION, BUT THAT REDUCTION PASSED ALMOST UNANIMOUSLY AND THEREFORE CONGRESS IS LIKELY TO APPROVE SOME MODERATE EXPANSION BEFORE END OF YEAR.
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I EMPHASIZED THAT OUR OBJECTIVE REMAINS REASONABLE BALANCE IN INDIAN OCEAN, WE CERTAINLY DO NOT WISH TO ENCOURAGE UNDESIRABLE ESCALATION, AND WE HAVE BEEN AND REMAIN RECEPTIVE TO ANY CONSTRUCTIVE SUGGESTIONS AS TO RESTRAINTS ON MILITARY ACTIVITY IN INDIAN OCEAN AREA.

5. RAMGOOLAM EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR OUR VIEWS.
MANHARD

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